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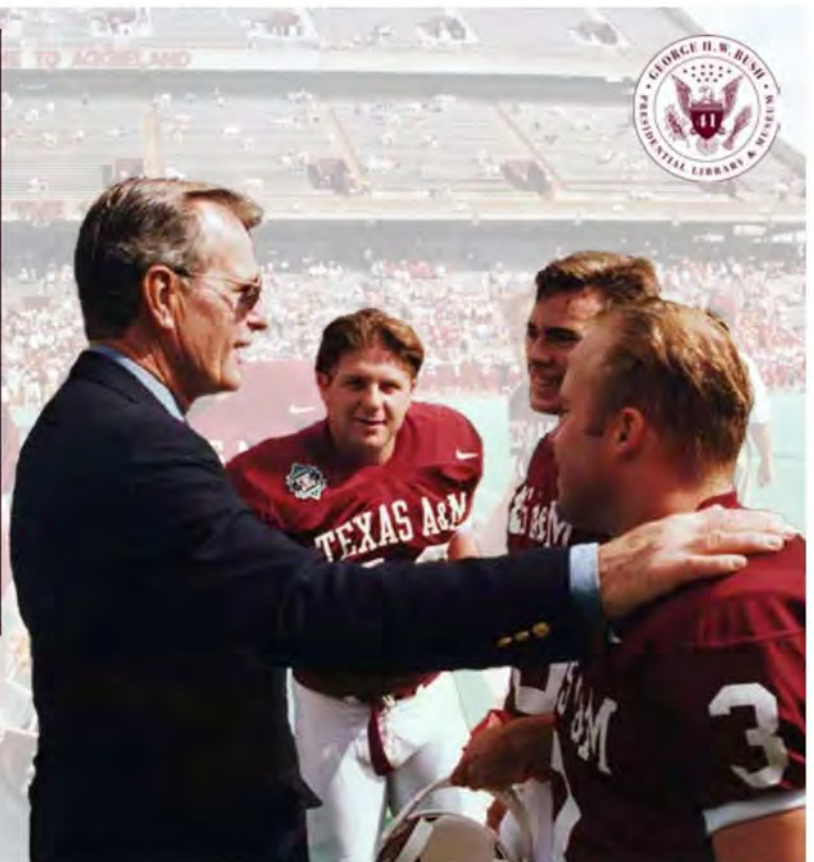
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ON THE COVER: New head football coach Mike Elko addresses the media on his first day on the job. Photo by Rob Havens '88

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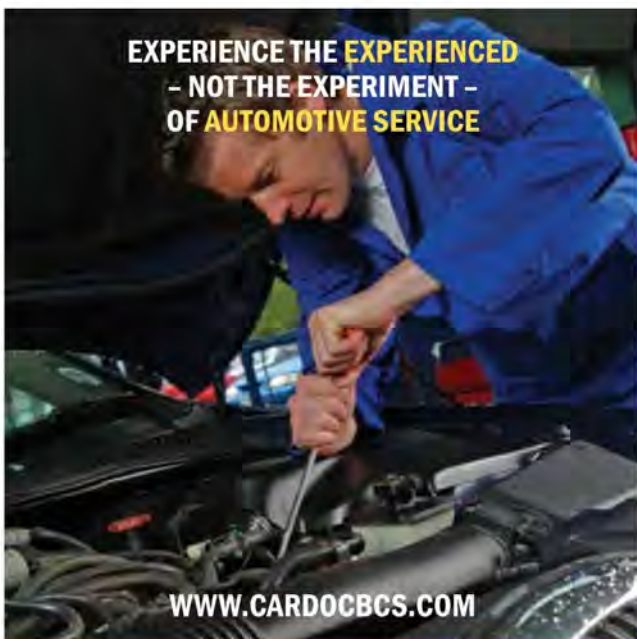


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Howdy Ags!

Well, it has been a crazy couple of weeks. I woke up the Sunday morning after the Mississippi State victory to the news that Jimbo had been fired. I was surprised at the timing, especially after we had played the best game of the season the night before, but I guess that's the business. With all of the grumbling over the last couple of years, I wasn't surprised that he was terminated, but with the big payout involved, I was definitely surprised about the timing. When people asked me who I hoped would be the next coach, I would always respond, Mike Elko. I'm a big fan of the hire. His success during his four years as the defensive coordinator here was enough to convince me he was the guy we needed to hire. Plus, he knows the culture, recruited half the team, and proved he can be a head coach the last two years at Duke. I was very impressed with his speech at the introductory celebration and his first press conference. I'm excited about the hire, and I love the idea of having a defensive-minded head coach. As a student in the late 80' during the Wrecking Crew days, it was truly the best!

Congratulations to Coach Jamie Morrison and our volleyball team for a great season. It was great to see us back in the NCAA Tournament again. I believe the sky's the limit for that program.

Congratulations to our soccer team for advancing to the second round of the NCAA Tournament. We don't take for granted how hard our girls work to make the tournament year after year.

Basketball is back, and Buzz Williams and his team are battling a tough non-conference schedule. Reed Arena has been a lot of fun to go out and watch these guys win!

Coach Taylor has our girls rolling as well. They are much improved this year and ready to make some noise this season.

Congratulations to our equestrian team as well, who beat four top-ten teams this fall! Let's Go!

Thanks to everyone who advertises with us and all of our subscribers. We look forward to covering more Aggie Sports in 2024! God Bless everyone!

Gig'em!

Rob '88



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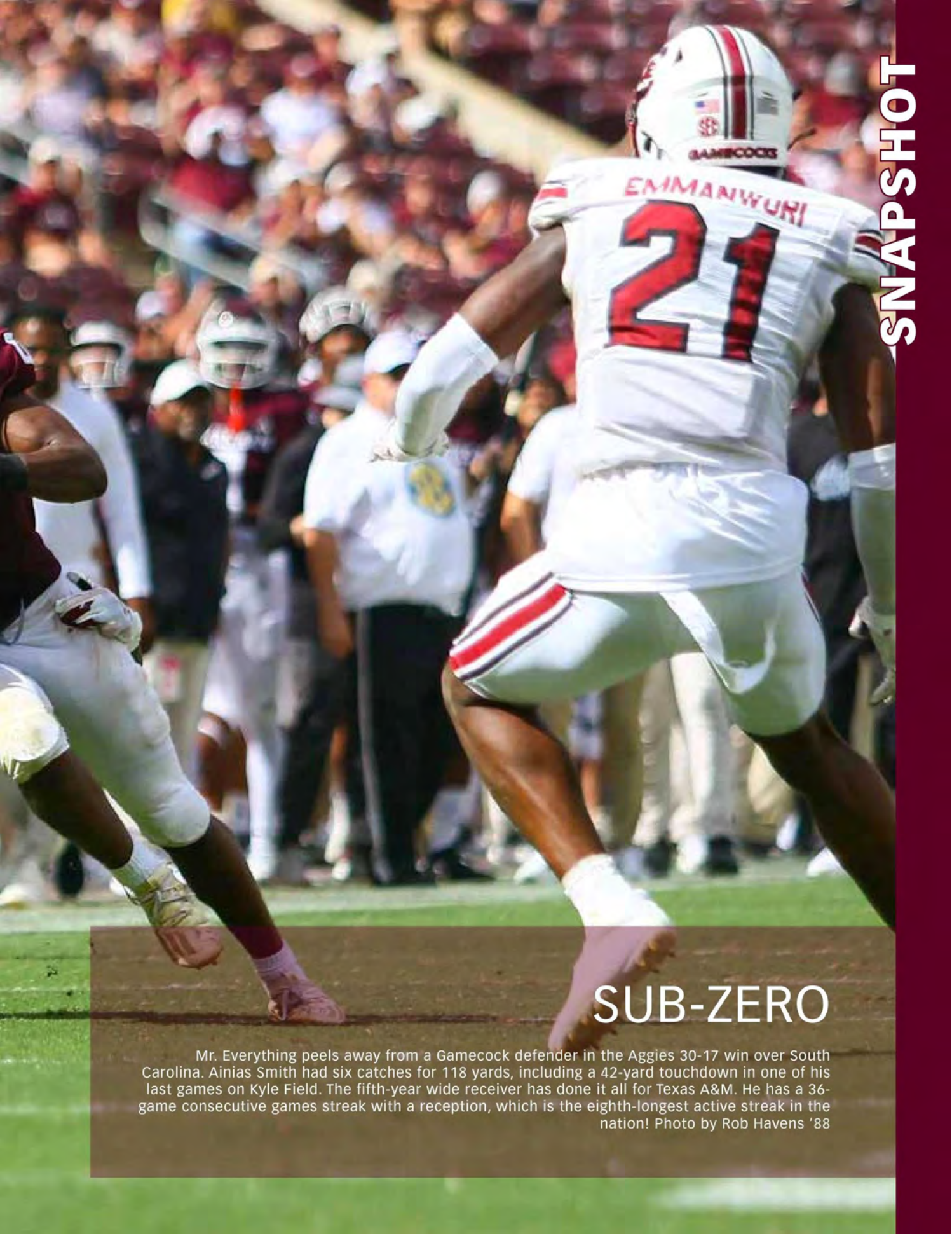




FIRST TOUCHDOWN

Jaylen Henderson did not let the kickoff return for a touchdown phase him as he jogged out onto Kyle Field for his first start as an Aggie against Mississippi State. He looked like a four-year starting veteran as he led the Aggies down the field 80 yards in just six plays and finished off the drive with a 22-yard touchdown run. Kyle Field erupted as the transfer quarterback dove into the end zone for the tying score. Photo by Rob Havens '88





SUB-ZERO

Mr. Everything peels away from a Gamecock defender in the Aggies 30-17 win over South Carolina. Ainias Smith had six catches for 118 yards, including a 42-yard touchdown in one of his last games on Kyle Field. The fifth-year wide receiver has done it all for Texas A&M. He has a 36-game consecutive games streak with a reception, which is the eighth-longest active streak in the nation! Photo by Rob Havens '88



SAVE

Fifth-year senior Kenna Caldwell stretches for a save in her final game at Ellis Field. The Aggies hosted the first-round NCAA tournament game against the Colorado Buffaloes and earned a 1-0 win. Caldwell finished the season with seven shutouts in goal. She registered five saves against the Buffaloes' attack. She had 68 starts in her Aggie career with 228 saves and 18 shutouts. Photo by Rob Havens '88



SAY CHEESE

The Aggies Men's Basketball team has had plenty to smile about in the first seven games of the season. Wade Taylor IV was named SEC Preseason Player of the Year. He scored 35 points vs FAU and led the Aggies to road wins over Penn State, Ohio State, and SMU. Photo by Rob Havens '88



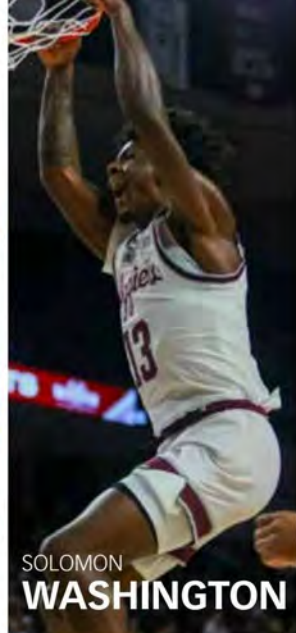
ELI
LAWRENCE



WADE
TAYLOR IV



WILDENS
LEVEQUE



SOLOMON
WASHINGTON



COACH BUZZ
WILLIAMS

MEN'S HOOPS

Texas A&M had a great start to the new season, winning six of seven, including four tough wins on the road. Buzz Williams was motivated to strengthen the schedule after seeing how the NCAA factors in the strength of the schedule for tournament seeding the last two years. Buzz returns most of last year's team, along with a few guys who are already making an impact. Henry Coleman has been a double-double machine so far, and if the Aggies can stay healthy, this team has the ability to make some noise at the Big Dance this fall.



COACH JONI
TAYLOR

WOMEN'S HOOPS

The Women's team has had a great turnaround this season, going 6-1 in the first seven games. Coach Taylor has done a tremendous job in the transfer portal. Lauren Ware, Aicha Coulibaly, and Endyia Rogers balled out in the first game and immediately impacted the program. Last year's slogan was "Becoming" and it looks like this team became a much better team!



SOLE
WILLIAMS



JANIAH
BARKER



LAUREN
WARE



AICHA
COULIBALY



KENNA
CALDWELL



ANDERSEN
WILLIAMS



ADYSEN
ARMENTA

SOCCER

After battling through a tough schedule, the Aggies earned their 28th invitation to the NCAA tournament in the last 29 years. The Ags were confident they would get in but were surprised to host the first-round game. They took advantage of playing on their home turf and scored a 1-0 victory over Colorado. The win earned them a second-round date with No. 1 Florida State. The Aggies gave the Noles everything they could handle but fell 1-0 to the nation's top team. The Noles were held to fewer than two goals for the second time all season.

EQUESTRIAN

Our ladies wrapped up the fall slate with a 5-1 record, including a 3-0 record in conference. The Aggies beat No. 2 Auburn, No. 5 Oklahoma St, No. 6 Georgia, and No. 7 South Carolina. Coach Tana McKay said, "I just can't say enough about this team. They work so well together, from behind the scenes to those competing, and that helps us get those final points."



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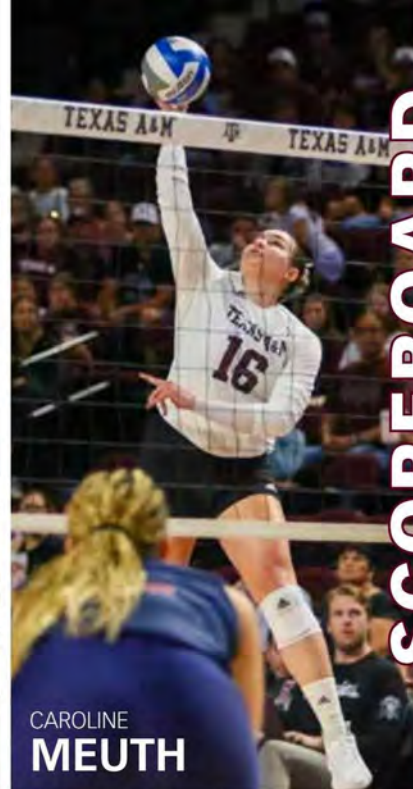
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CAROLINE
MEUTH

VOLLEYBALL

The Aggie volleyball team had a stellar season under first-year coach Jamie Morrison. They worked and fought through a tough conference schedule and earned an at-large bid into the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2019. The Aggies' first-round match was in Austin against the defending national champion Texas Longhorns. The Ags came out on fire in the first set, going 10-0 at one point, and won the first set. They would drop the second set 25-13 but would battle back and give their all in the last two sets before falling three sets to one.



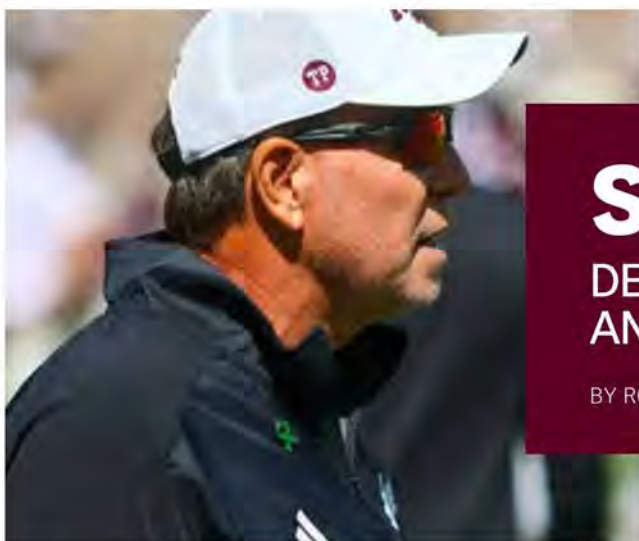
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SHOCK & AWE

DESCRIBES JIMBO FISHER'S ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE FROM TEXAS A&M

BY ROB HAVENS '88



In November of 2017, when reports came out that Jimbo Fisher was leaving Florida State to become the head coach at Texas A&M, experts and fans around the country, especially here in Aggieland, were shocked. Fisher had won three ACC titles and a national championship at FSU; they were a perennial top-ten program while he was there.

Texas A&M's director of athletics at the time was Scott Woodward, who had a relationship with Jimbo during their time at LSU, went and lured him away from the Noles with a \$75 million guaranteed contract. Experts were in awe that the Aggies would spend that much money on a coach. It definitely set the bar that lasted only a short time as top coaches around the nation saw their contracts increase, and before too long, Jimbo wasn't even in the top five of the highest-paid coaches in the nation.

Even before his arrival in College Station, reports out of Tallahassee said that Jimbo was butting heads with administrators for years about facilities and financial support from the University to help him keep the Seminoles at the top. They believed there was no pleasing him no matter what they did.

So Jimbo gets here, and Scott gives him the keys to the castle. Donors were more than happy to provide him with whatever he needed to bring home a national championship to Texas A&M. Experts believed this was a sleeping giant and it just needed the right coach to get the Aggies to the promised land.

Expectations were high as Chancellor John Sharp delivered the infamous plaque for the national championship that just needed the date to be filled in. When reporters asked why we would sign a coach to a ten-year deal, Sharp replied, "Because I couldn't get him to sign a 20-year deal."

The 12th Man Foundation went to work, and donors gladly gave money to upgrade facilities. A few years later, when NIL became a deal, the powers that be

ensured we were well-equipped to care for athletes who came to A&M.

Jimbo recruited the best classes that A&M had signed in years. It made sense that if we wanted to compete with the best, we had to have the best players, and over his six years here, he transformed the roster into one of the best in the country.

In his first year, the Aggies went 9-4 and finished tied for second in the SEC West with a nice Gator Bowl victory. In year two, we stepped back and went 8-5 with a Texas Bowl victory. Then came 2020, a COVID-19-shortened season where the Aggies went 9-1 against an all-SEC schedule and got screwed out of the CFP but still went on to beat UNC in the Orange Bowl to finish No. 4 in the country. Jimbo Fisher told everyone, "And we ain't done yet!"

But unfortunately, that would be the highlight and best season the Aggies would have under Jimbo. The Ags would fall to 8-4 in '21 and 5-7 in '22, and it seemed as though things were definitely headed in the wrong direction. Jimbo was still recruiting at a staggering pace, but our offense was sputtering, we were snake bit with injured quarterbacks, and the natives were getting restless.

Jimbo was told he needed to hire an offensive coordinator and give up play-calling duties, which he reluctantly did. But since his firing, reports have come out that Petrino was never given free rein to install his offense and call the plays he wanted to run.

Ross Bjork told the media at a Nov 12th press conference that following our loss at Ole Miss, he had decided that we had a problem and there needed to be a change. Jimbo was terminated on that Sunday morning, the day after a 41-point victory over Mississippi State. Aggies around the world were shocked at the news. There had been plenty of

grumbling about getting rid of Fisher, but with a \$76 million buyout and a favorable schedule next year, it seemed unlikely that he would get canned this year.

Bjork explained that the program seemed to be "in neutral." A change was necessary, and after talking to our new president and explaining his beliefs, the decision was made to move on.

Since his firing, reports have come out that said Jimbo needed to be more organized and that he was unwilling to take suggestions from other coaches. That it was his way or the highway. Insiders told media members that there was a lack of accountability in the program. Whatever the reasons, it was evident that our program was headed in the wrong direction.

Paul Finebaum said, "Texas A&M is no closer to a national championship than they were before Jimbo got there." Most people in the know understand that his statement is not true. Our roster has gotten so much better over the last six years. Our facilities are better. Texas A&M is still a sleeping giant in need of the right coach to get us there.

Although it has been tough the last two years, we will always have the seven-overtime win over LSU, and the last-second win over Bama at home. We will all remember the big win over Carolina in the Orange Bowl and knocking LSU out of CFP contention last year on Kyle Field.

We were all shocked when we found out that Jimbo was coming to A&M, and we were all shocked when we heard he was fired. There were good and bad times in between, but the program is still strong, and we are fired up to have Coach Elko back in College Station. Our defenses with him as the head guy were phenomenal, and it is so good to welcome him back. We say goodbye to Jimbo and wish him the best. He will still be on the payroll for several years. ■





AGGIES WELCOME BACK

MIKE ELKO

AS OUR NEW HEAD COACH

BY ROB HAVENS '88



Just 15 days after Jimbo Fisher was terminated, Texas A&M hired his replacement, and the 12th Man couldn't be happier with the choice. The Aggies' former defensive coordinator, Mike Elko, arrived late Sunday night and, on Monday, November 27th, was introduced as the new head coach in Kyle Field's Hall of Champions.

Ross Bjork had addressed the media just two weeks before and stated that Jimbo had been terminated and a search for Texas A&M's new coach would begin. He said the search would be "comprehensive in nature," the timing allowed before the portal opening date and early signing day would be used to select the best candidates for the job. He said they would be "Diligent, confidential, and efficient" in the search for the new coach.

"A football advisory group of key people that understand winning football" would be used to determine the best person for the job, according to Bjork. Industry experts and former players would be consulted before making the final choice.

The profile of the new coach, Bjork said, "Would include a coach that has a program identity, great interpersonal skills, a track record of player development, commitment to academics, a recruiting machine, supreme organizational skills, a culture of discipline, passion for the game, a proven winner, strong leadership skills, involved in the community, of course, a knowledge of X's & O's and someone that understands and also can capitalize in today's modern-day college athletics."

He believes that "The ingredients for a championship are here. Aggies want to do it the right way," and Bjork concluded, "And deserve excellence in everything we do." He also emphasized that they'd love to have more consistency of leadership and continuity in the length of the head coaching position and possibly find "The next RC Slocum who could be here a long time."

In the days after the presser, social media ran rampant with possible coaches who might fill the position, but Mike Elko was one of the first names that everyone would mention. He came to A&M six years ago, and as our defensive coordinator, he grew and developed our defense into one of the best in the country. Then, two years ago, he took advantage of the opportunity to become the head coach at Duke. He led the Devils to a 9-4 record in his first year and was named ACC Coach of the Year. At a basketball school, he made Duke relevant in football.

Elko continued to grow and develop his players at Duke. He led them to a huge upset win over No. 9 Clemson earlier this season and moved the Devils into the Top 25. Duke was 4-0 and in a dogfight with No. 11 Notre Dame before his starting quarterback went down. The Blue Devils would lose a close one and finish the 2023 campaign at 7-5.

According to Bjork, they considered close to 30 candidates. Sitting head coaches, NFL coaches, and more were spoken to or interviewed for the job. On Saturday night, November 25th, just hours after the Aggies lost to LSU, social media went nuts with reports that Kentucky Coach Mark Stoops was going to be named our next head coach. The backlash was

instantaneous as Aggies around the world, including current players, showed their disdain for the choice. For two and a half hours, Twitter blew up until Mark Stoops posted that he knew there were reports about him leaving, but he was staying at Kentucky. The 12th Man exhaled with a sigh of relief.

The next morning, reports came out that Mike Elko was the man we wanted. Social media once again went nuts, but this time it was with excitement that our coach was coming home. Fans, current players, former players, and alumni were all fired up. Later that night, we discovered that Coach Elko was on a plane headed to Aggieland. Monday morning, the Athletic Department announced that we

for Aggie Football to compete for Championships. And with that, Coach Elko greeted the fans with enormous applause.

Elko said, "I can't tell you how excited I am to be back at this great institution. This place was so special to me the last time I was here. We made so many fond, special memories of this place. I couldn't be more thankful to be back. To see so many familiar faces in the crowd, it's just an awesome day. It's an awesome day for me and my family."

Coach Elko thanked the administration and everyone involved in bringing him back. He also thanked his family for allowing him to chase his dreams. He then explained, "My vision for

accomplish. Nobody will hand us anything, not in this conference, not in this country, not in this era of college football. We are going to have to go out, we are going to have to work, and we are going to have to get it."

His vision includes hard work; he said, "We are going to develop a blue-collar mentality and understand that there are no shortcuts to success. We are going to roll up our sleeves. We are going to go to work every day, and we will accomplish amazing and great things here very, very quickly."

He promised, "We will develop men. We will graduate players, and we will win championships on the field on Saturdays. This program and this job come with a



had signed our new coach.

At the introductory celebration event, Ross Bjork thanked Elijah Robinson for keeping the team together and for his hard work. He then talked about Mike Elko: "Coach Mike Elko is a modern-day and innovative football coach with a blue-collar mentality. That fits perfectly here at Texas A&M. He played the game. He says he wasn't very good, but I'm not sure about that. He got an Ivy League education. He then paid his dues by working all over college football and now has head coaching experience at a high level."

Bjork explained that Elko was a great leader with one of the best football IQ's in the coaching world. He had a great plan and vision

this program is very simple. We are going to build the premier football program in the country, okay? We are not going to talk about it anymore. We are going to be about it. We are going to chase excellence in every aspect of our life. We are going to be excellent in the classroom. We are going to earn degrees. We are going to get our Aggie rings. We are going to become great members of this great university."

He admitted it won't happen overnight, "There is no elevator. I say this to my players all the time. There is no button you push to get to the top of college football. There's a stair that you have to climb every single day to accomplish what you want to

lot of expectations, and I'm ready for them. I'm ready for everything that this program should be about. I'm ready to take this program everywhere where it wants to go. I cannot wait to roll up my sleeves and go to work. Thank you so much for believing in me. Thank you so much for allowing me and my family this opportunity. We will make you extremely proud starting this fall on Saturdays, I promise you that."

This business has no guarantees, but it looks like Ross Bjork found the coaching profile he was looking for. Based on his results in the past, we know he can coach. Elko has brought hope back to Aggieland. He has all of the pieces to the puzzle; he just has to put them together! ■



2023 FOOTBALL REWIND



GAME 7



TENNESSEE 20 - TEXAS A&M 13

After a tough loss to Alabama, the Aggies were fired up to get back on the winning track as they traveled to Knoxville! The Ags got on the board first as quarterback Max Johnson dove into the end zone, scoring his first rushing touchdown as an Aggie. But the Volunteers answered with a touchdown of their own when Jacob Warren scored from seven yards out on a reception from Joe Milton III. The Aggies would lead at the half 10-7 after they added a 41-yard field goal by Randy Bond in the second quarter. Both teams struggled to get things going offensively in the third. The game changed when the Vols downed a punt on the Aggie one-yard line. Unable to gain any yards, the Ags were forced to punt, and Tennessee's Dee Williams weaved through the Aggie defenders and went 39 yards for a touchdown to put the Vols on top 14-10. Johnson led the team down the field on the next drive, but the Ags would have to settle for a 24-yard field goal when they stalled out on the UT seven-yard line. Josh DeBerry gave the Aggies hope when he intercepted a pass in the end zone in the fourth quarter, but once again, the Aggies' ensuing drive stalled out, and Randy Bond missed a 50-yard field goal. The Vols would add two more field goals in the quarter, and Johnson's final pass would be intercepted as the Aggies fell 20-13.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF AGGIE ATHLETICS

GAME 8



TEXAS A&M 30 - SOUTH CAROLINA 17

The Aggies rested and healed up during the bye week before welcoming the Gamecocks of South Carolina. The Aggies had suffered a shocking loss to USC last season and were ready to get some revenge. South Carolina scored first after getting a good field position on a short punt by the Aggies. They drove the ball 65 yards and scored on a fourth and goal from the one-yard line to take the early lead 7-0. True freshman Rueben Owens would answer in the second when he broke free up the middle for a 14-yard touchdown. The Aggies took advantage of a muffed punt return at the Carolina 48 and drove to their one, where Amari Daniels powered up the middle for a touchdown and a 14-7 lead. After a big hold by the Aggie defense, the Ags would need just one play with 00:52 left in the half for Johnson to connect with Ainius Smith, who scurried for a 42-yard touchdown and a 21-7 lead at the half! The Gamecocks would score a field goal in the third quarter, and Spencer Rattler would put together a seven-play 77-yard touchdown drive in the fourth quarter, but the Aggies would add three second-half field goals to secure the 30-17 win.





GAME 9



OLE MISS 38 - TEXAS A&M 35

Texas A&M headed into Oxford on Saturday, November 4th, to face the #11 Rebels in front of a frenzied crowd and one of the biggest trash-talking coaches in the SEC. Kiffin has continued to antagonize Jimbo and the Aggies, and it was time to shut him up. Unfortunately, the Rebels looked as if they might run us out of the stadium, taking a 14-0 lead. But things changed for the Aggies when the Rebels lined up for a 41-yard field goal attempt midway through the second quarter. Shemar Turner blocked the punt, and Jacoby Matthews caught the ball and raced 75 yards for a touchdown, bringing the Aggies back to within seven points, 14-7. Ole Miss would add another touchdown, but Le'Veon Moss would bring the Aggies closer with a 13-yard touchdown run that made the score 20-14 at the half. The Rebels would extend the lead to 28-14 before Max Johnson found his brother Jake for a 28-yard touchdown, and the Aggies had new life. Amari Daniels added another touchdown in the fourth quarter, and Max Johnson would score from one yard out to give the Ags the lead 35-31 with less than 5 minutes to play. Unfortunately, the Rebels drove 75 yards and scored the go-ahead touchdown with 1:40 to play. The Aggies would battle to the end, and with 2 seconds left, Randy Bond attempted a 47-yard field goal that was grazed by a defender and fell short to end the game.



GAME 10



TEXAS A&M 51 - MISSISSIPPI STATE 10

Reports surfaced on the Sunday after the Ole Miss loss that Max Johnson had injured his ribs and was done for the year. Jimbo kept the news quiet until game day when Max arrived on the field without wearing his uniform. Transfer Jaylen Henderson took the field and made the most of his opportunity. With the exception of the opening kickoff, in which the Bulldogs returned 94 yards for a touchdown, the Aggies played their best game of the year. The defense dominated the game, forcing four turnovers, which included three interceptions and a fumble that was picked up by Shemar Stewart and returned for a touchdown. Petrino called the perfect game for the young QB, allowing him to make short passes and use his legs to avoid pressure and score on the ground and through the air. In his first game as a starter, he completed 11 of 19 passes for 150 yards and two touchdowns. He also had 12 carries for 60 yards and two touchdowns. On his first drive of the game, he led the Aggies 80 yards in just six plays and got his first touchdown as an Aggie on a 22-yard run that he dove into the end zone. The Aggies dominated the Dogs in a game that wound up being Jimbo Fisher's last game as our head coach. The day after the game, he was released immediately.





GAME 11



TEXAS A&M 38 - ABILENE CHRISTIAN 10

After Jimbo was fired, Ross Bjork selected Assistant Head Coach Elijah Robinson to be the interim head coach through the bowl game. Reports from practices said the guys were having fun again and had come together as the brotherhood to finish out the season. It was pretty slow going out of the shoot for the Aggies, who managed only 10 points in the first half. After a pick-six gave the Wildcats the early seven-point lead, Rueben Owens scored on a seven-yard run to tie up the score. Randy Bond kicked a 34-yard field goal in the second quarter to give the Ags the lead at the half. Jaylen Henderson dropped a dime in the hands of Noah Thomas for a 13-yard touchdown, and Moose Muhammad III added another score on a beautiful 49-yard reception that put the Aggies up 24-7. Moose had four catches on the day for 104 yards, including a one-handed grab that was No. 1 on Sports Center Top Ten Plays of the Day, in which he hurdled a potential tackler for a 38-yard gain. Robinson was able to get a lot of the players on the field to show what they could do. David Bailey took advantage of his playing time and scored a touchdown from the three-yard line. True freshman quarterback Marcel Reed came in at the end and threw a dart to freshman Jaden Platt for a 13-yard score.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RUSSELL JAMES

GAME 12

LSU

LSU 42 - TEXAS A&M 30

In the final game of the regular season, the Aggies were on a mission. Petrino was on the sideline and ready to open up the playbook against the No. 14 Tigers. The defense came out tough and held the high-powered offense to a three-and-out. But a wide-open dropped pass ended the Aggies' next drive on a fourth and two. The Tigers would take a 7-0 lead in the first quarter, but the Aggies would answer with 17 points of their own in the second quarter to lead 17-14 at the half. Le'Veon Moss scored on the ground, Jake Johnson scored through the air, and the Aggies added a 48-yard field goal by Bond that gave them confidence that they could win. The team played loose and controlled the time of possession. To open the second half they drove the ball 75 yards and finished the drive with a one-yard dive by offensive tackle turned fullback Mark Nabou Jr, who threw his 325-pound body into the Tiger end zone. The Aggies had a ten-point lead and all the momentum, but Heisman Hopeful Jayden Daniels took over and led the Tigers to 21 unanswered points and a 35-24 lead with eight minutes to play. The Aggies did not give up though, and Max Wright caught a pass, broke tackles, and rumbled for 51 yards for an Aggie touchdown with 7:20 to play. The Tigers added one more touchdown, and the Aggies fell 42-30 in the final game of the regular season.





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POWERLIFTING

BY ROB HAVENS '88

One of the oldest and largest clubs at Texas A&M is the Powerlifting team. The club was founded in the same year as Texas A&M Sport Clubs in 1974. The purpose of starting the club was to allow students an opportunity to compete in intercollegiate powerlifting competitions while representing Texas A&M University. The team is registered as an official club under USA Powerlifting, also known as the USAPL.

Competitions include three main lifts that athletes participate in; squat, bench press, and deadlift. An athlete is given three attempts of each lift for a total of nine attempts. Each athlete is separated by gender, age, and bodyweight and competes for the highest total between all three lifts. Whoever gets the highest total wins!

There are currently 54 active team members, one of the largest rosters in team history. They practice a minimum of three times a week. When we asked Club president Gabe Cuadra what made a good powerlifter he said, "To be a great

powerlifter you have to be obsessed. You need to have the discipline and dedication to make the necessary sacrifices when it comes to optimizing your nutrition, recovery, managing stress, and training. Besides that, having great genetics doesn't hurt either!"

Cuadra loved the discipline behind consistent training and told us, "I ran track all four years in high school and I wanted to continue being a student-athlete, although I knew I was no match for running competitively in college. I instead poured my efforts into lifting weights, and through mutual friends, was discovered by some members of the team on social media. They started to train me my freshman year of college in March 2021 in order to get me ready for tryouts in the fall. After six months of hard work, I tried out for the team and made it. The rest is history!"

The work has paid off for Cuadra, who has broken 8 state records and currently holds 3 out of 4 records on the team for the heaviest squat, bench, and total

in the raw 90kg weight class. We asked Cuadra about other members who have had success, and he told us, "The former president of the club, Carter Wheat, accomplished three national titles in the men's equipped 140kg+ weight class, including two collegiate titles and one open title."

The thing Cuadra loves most about the team is the community; he explained, "My favorite parts of the semester are when members are peaking for their meets and take their heaviest singles before the meet. The whole room will watch and shout as you pull, bench, or squat that new PR (personal record) up. With the support of the team, it feels like you can lift just about anything!"

It seems like the one constant with all sport clubs presidents that we interview is that they all love competing and representing Texas A&M, but the memories they make and the lifelong friendships they build are always the things they love the most.

MEN'S ULTIMATE CLUB

BY ROB HAVENS '88

We love to feature clubs that many readers don't know much about. When you hear the words pull, mark, check, and pick, you might not have any idea what sport we are talking about. But Texas A&M's Men's Ultimate Club is one of the coolest sports on campus.

The game features two teams of seven players who attempt to score goals by throwing a Frisbee or disc to one another on a rectangular field with end zones similar to a football field. A goal is scored when a player catches a legal pass in the end zone.

Players are not allowed to run with the disc, and they have ten seconds to throw it once they catch it. Games are usually 90 minutes or 13 points and the players on the field referee the games based on principles called the Spirit of the Game.

The game requires athleticism, skill, teamwork, and character. The game has characteristics from football, soccer, and even basketball as players pivot, throw

and defend without contact while working as a team to score a goal.

The current A&M Men's Ultimate Club has 58 members. They practice three nights a week from 8–10 p.m. at the Penberthy Rec Sports Complex. Competitions usually consist of seven games that are played on Saturday and Sunday.

According to club president Ryan Petre about half the members joined the club with previous experience. Petre said, "I joined because I played in high school and loved it. I did not want to pursue soccer into college and ultimate allowed me to keep playing sports."

We asked Petre what makes a great Ultimate competitor, and he told us, "Physically, those who can run fast and jump high have a solid advantage. Being able to catch the disc higher than your opponents or outrun them to make a catch is the basics of the game. For those not as gifted, accurate throws, quick cuts,

and good defense can make up for those genes. If the best players are always guarded well, they won't get the disc."

The club's biggest rival is the University of Texas. The team will travel to Florida in February for a tournament and then compete in Austin in April to try and qualify for nationals.

When we asked Petre what his favorite thing about being on the team was, he replied, "The friends I have made in the program and on other teams. The ultimate community is truly one of a kind, and I am grateful to be a part of it."








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